

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (previously amended): A flexible support apparatus comprising:

- 5           a support base having an opening in one surface;  
            a mounting bracket having an opening in one surface; and  
            a permanently bendable continuously solid metal rod having a first end installed in the  
opening of the support base and fused directly thereto with a weld joint formed directly between  
the first end of the metal rod and the support base, and having a second end installed in the  
10   opening of the mounting bracket and fused directly thereto with a weld joint formed directly  
between the second end of the metal rod and the mounting bracket.

Claim 2 (previously amended): The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the metal rod is of substantially  
constant diameter between the first and second ends thereof.

- Claim 3 (previously amended): The apparatus of claim 2 wherein each of the opening in the  
15   support base and the opening in the mounting bracket further comprises a second larger opening  
into which opposite ends of the flexible sheath are inserted.

Claim 4 (cancelled)

Claim 5 (previously amended): The apparatus of claim 3 wherein each of the support base and the  
mounting bracket are formed of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material.

- 20   Claim 6 (original): The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the metal rod further comprises a solid metal  
rod formed of a material selected from the group of materials comprising: aluminum, copper, and  
copper coated with another metal material.

Claim 7 (original): The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first and second ends of the metal rod  
further comprise an upset metal finish.

Claim 8 (previously amended): The apparatus of claim 3 wherein each of the metal rod, the support base and the mounting bracket are formed of a material that is metal-to-metal weldable by conventional means.

Claim 9 (cancelled)

5 Claim 10 (cancelled)

Claim 11 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the~~ A flexible support apparatus for supporting heavy objects relative to a fixed surface, the flexible support apparatus comprising:

10 a support base formed of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material and having a substantially tubular aperture;

a mounting bracket formed of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material and having a substantially tubular aperture; and

15 a permanently bendable continuously solid metal rod having first and second ends of the metal rod further comprise each further comprising upset surface material, the first end being inserted into the tubular aperture of the support base and having an ultrasonic weld joint formed therebetween, and the second end being inserted into the tubular aperture of the mounting bracket and having an ultrasonic weld joint formed therebetween.

20 Claim 12 (original): The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the metal rod further comprise a metal rod formed of a material selected from the group of materials comprising: aluminum, copper, and copper coated with zinc.

Claim 13 (cancelled)

Claim 14 (cancelled)

25 Claim 15 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 14~~ A flexible support apparatus for supporting heavy objects relative to a fixed surface, the flexible support apparatus comprising:  
a support base having a substantially tubular aperture;

a mounting bracket having a substantially tubular aperture;

a permanently bendable continuously solid metal rod having a first end inserted into the tubular aperture of the support base and having a weld joint formed therebetween, and a second end inserted into the tubular aperture of the mounting bracket and having a weld joint formed therebetween;

a flexible plastic sheath disposed around the metal rod between the support base and the mounting bracket; and

wherein each of the support base and the mounting bracket further comprises a respective counter-bore substantially concentric with the respective tubular aperture and sized to admit the flexible plastic sheath.

Claim 16 (cancelled)

Claim 17 (cancelled)

Claim 18 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 17, further comprising~~ A method for forming a flexible support apparatus, the method comprising:

molding a support base of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material and having a tubular aperture therein;

molding a mounting bracket of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material and having a tubular aperture therein;

upsetting [[ the ]] metal around first and second ends of [[ the ]] a length of permanently bendable continuously solid metal rod prior to welding;

ultrasonically welding the first end of the metal rod in the tubular aperture of the support base; and

ultrasonically welding the second end of the metal rod in the tubular aperture of the mounting bracket.

Claim 19 (previously amended): The method of claim 18 wherein:

forming a support base having a tubular aperture therein further comprises forming a second tubular aperture therein that is of larger diameter and is substantially concentric with a first tubular aperture having the metal rod welded therein;

5 forming a mounting bracket having a tubular aperture therein further comprises forming a second tubular aperture therein that is of larger diameter and is substantially concentric with a first tubular aperture having the metal rod fused therein; and

installing a flexible sheath around the metal rod by inserting opposite ends of the flexible sheath into the respective second tubular apertures.

10 Claim 20 (cancelled)

Claim 21 (cancelled)